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Graduate Studies

Ph. D., Economics, Harvard University   2015 – 2021 (expected)

References:

Professor Michael Kremer   Professor Jie Bai
University of Chicago   Harvard University
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Professor Emily Breza
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Undergraduate Studies

BA., Applied Mathematics, Economics and Geography, UC Berkeley, highest honors   2014

Teaching and Research Fields

Primary fields: Development economics
Secondary fields: Digital economy, Applied microeconomics

Research Papers

"Lifting Growth Barriers for New Firms: Evidence from an Entrepreneur Training Experiment with Two Million Online Businesses", with Yizhou Jin (Job Market Paper)
Expansion of e-commerce presents new opportunities for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to enter broader markets at lower costs, but the new entrants face barriers to growth after entry. To facilitate the new entrants to overcome these barriers, we implement a training program as a randomized controlled experiment with over two million new sellers on a large e-commerce platform. The training focuses on practical skills specific to online business operations. Treated new sellers with access to the training earn higher revenues. These sellers improve marketing skills and attract more consumers to their online stores. Leveraging detailed consumer-seller matched search and browsing data, we find that consumers have higher purchase probability overall when they encounter new sellers regardless of treatment status. In the cases of purchases, consumers choose treated new sellers over incumbents; moreover, doing so does not lower the quality of their purchases. We use a structural model to characterize consumer

demand and recover sellers' underlying quality. Both treated and control new sellers have higher quality compared to incumbents. The training increases new sellers' likelihood of being encountered by consumers, which improves the matching quality between consumers and sellers. The counterfactual exercise shows that training leads to higher consumer surplus and the platform's total sales due to market expansion. The platform could increase profits in both the short and the long run because of the training.

"Information Acquisition and the Return to Data: Evidence from Firms on an E-commerce Platform", with Yizhou Jin
This paper investigates online retailers' decision to acquire information and the impact of data access on their business strategy and on revenue growth. We take advantage of proprietary data from a large e-commerce platform that sells data analytics products to virtual stores operating on it. The product provides detailed information on customer sources and characteristics, aggregate demand, and competitor strategies. Our empirical investigation relies on several high-frequency panel datasets and makes use of back-end changes in the pricing, variety, and bundling of the data analytics products. Focusing on several consumer electronics and peripherals markets, we find three main results. (i) Data acquisition facilitates growth, but small retailers are very sensitive to the cost of data. (ii) Retailers take marketing and product actions with the data collected but leave prices largely unchanged. (iii) A counterfactual simulation shows that a uniform reduction in the cost of data raises overall platform sales while reducing market concentration on the margin.

Research Papers in Progress

"Childcare Needs and Parents' Labor Supply: Evidence from the COVID-19 Lockdown", with Sen Ma and Hao Xue
School closure during the COVID-19 outbreak could cause disruptions to parents' labor supply. We use data from a unique survey on 1,354 junior high school students and their parents from Shaanxi province, China, to address this question. We find that this temporary shock that increased the needs for family-provided childcare significantly reduced the probability of parents returning to work when workplaces were already reopened, but schools were still closed. We document inequality both within and across households due to parents' heterogeneous responses. Mothers, migrant workers, and children from low-income families are the most vulnerable group. Since parents needed to spend more time supervising their children when classes moved online, such additional childcare needs further increased parents' burden of school closure.

"Using Data for Development: Evidence from a Phone System for Agricultural Advice", with Torsten Figueiredo Walter, Michael Kremer, Ofir Reich, Sam van Herwaarden, and Habtamu Yesigat

Teaching Experience

Development Economics (Econ 2390), Michael Kremer	2020
Senior Thesis Seminar (Econ 985)	2019
Advanced Industrial Organization (Econ 1642), Myrto Kalouptsidi	2018
Households, Firms, and Communities in Developing Countries (Econ 1642), Emily Breza	2018

Relevant Positions

Research Fellow, Luohan Academy, Alibaba, Hangzhou, China	2018 - 2020
Research Assistant for Benjamin Enke (Harvard)	2018
Consultant, Precision Agriculture for Development	2017
Research Assistant for Gautam Rao and Michael Kremer (Harvard)	2017
Research Assistant for Stefano DellaVigna (UC Berkeley)	2014 - 2015

Awards and Fellowships

Harvard Dissertation Completion Fellowship	2020
Certificate of Teaching Excellence, Bok Center, Harvard University	2019

Weiss Family Program for Research in Development Economics Research Grants	2017
Harvard Lab for Economic Applications and Policy Research Grants	2017
Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Science PhD Scholarship	2015-2016
Departmental Citation of Economics, UC Berkeley	2014
The Piercy Lionel Davis Award for Excellence in Scholarship in Mathematics, UC Berkeley	2014

Conferences and Presentations

CODE@MIT (2020), Advances with Field Experiment Conference (2020), ACM Economics and Computation Conference (2020), Luohan Academy Digital Economy Conference (2019)

Other

Programming Skills: R, Python, SQL, Stata, ArcGIS
Languages: Chinese (native), English (fluent)
Citizenship: China